

### How to Prioritize and Design Your Individual Exercise Program

1. **Goals**-Make a short list of no more than 3 items of what you'd like to achieve:
  - a. A flexibility goal-i.e improve range of motion in certain joints
  - b. A functional activity goal: i.e. transfer with less help, sit-to-stand without the use of hands, walk \_\_\_ minutes, Stand to cook \_\_\_ minutes
  - c. A balance goal: i.e sit at edge of firm chair without use of hands for 1 minute, stand with feet close together 20 seconds, stand on one foot for 10 seconds
2. Solicit **professional advice**-if you have a P.T. or trainer ask for their assistance in developing goals and some specific exercises to achieve them. Ask them to critique the quality of your movement.
3. Think about what **type** of exercise might give you joy and seems doable. How many days a week can you commit to? Make a place in your schedule to accomplish this but be flexible. Symptoms and energy level may vary throughout the day. Might require just picking a different time or different exercise.
4. **Daily exercise** Vary the exercise-upper body vs. lower body or balance vs coordination emphasis but do **something** daily. Consistency yields improvement.
5. **Anticipate** a few sore muscles or temporary fatigue but don't give up due to pain or fatigue. Just scale back in intensity or duration. Reassess the type of exercise
6. **Document** your efforts-it may help but it doesn't need to be obsessive.
7. **Endurance**-make reasonable goals. People with MS will usually need a more gradual progression in intensity and a longer time frame for improving strength and endurance.

#### Ideal Adult Guidelines:

A total of 2 ½ to 5 hours per week (150 minutes) of moderate intensity. It can be broken up into very small increments i.e. 30 seconds of "chair running" or 5 minutes of attempting your best quality of walking at whatever speed you can achieve without lacking quality of movement. Use whatever assistive device gives you the best quality of movement.

Moderate intensity usually means you can talk but not sing. For people with MS it may be necessary to lower the bar due to complications of decreased sensation, spasticity, difficult coordination or diminished balance skills, use of an assistive device. All these require an increase in energy demands because it reduces efficiency of movement.

**Fun Fact:** Only 22% of adults meet the recommended activity level in a week. 36% of adults report no leisure time exercise. Work to beat the averages!

For the average adult, taking 2,000 steps equals about one mile, depending on one's stride. Estimates show that people may get as many as 5,000 steps a day just going about regular

activities of daily living. Whatever your baseline is you will derive health benefits by increasing your daily minimum.

**To determine your starting point in gait training:**

1. Determine how many steps/repetitions/minutes (pick one) that you can do before you first notice you are losing the quality of your movement or feel one of your familiar MS signs (blurred vision, foot drop, more hunched posture, hips sagging)
2. Reduce your time engaged in that form of exercise by 50% to 75% of that number. Particularly if you are fatigued the rest of the day or have difficulty using that muscle group (i.e. foot drop persists) do only 50% of that intensity the following days.
3. You should progress your walking or chair exercise routine **slowly**. For example: walk for 3 minutes, rest for 2 minutes, repeat for 2 or 3 cycles.
4. Improvement can be measured by time, distance, or speed (# of steps in a one minute)
5. Depending on your starting level increase walking or exercise routine by small increments every week or two. That may mean only 30 seconds to a minute.

**These same principles can be applied if you are doing wheelchair exercise with active movements or with bands.**

**Posture, Posture, Posture**-you increase the intensity of exercise by maintaining good core strength throughout your exercise program. If your posture falls apart you are fatiguing. Your posture may not be perfect when you first start a program but it can always improve with intentional movement. Think about it throughout the day. Sit in different chairs because it will make you use your postural muscle in different ways.